

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 04697 01 OF 02 141445Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
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O P 141401Z AUG 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4697

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PBOR MILI LE IS  
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: CONVERSATION WITH DANY CHAMOUN

1. BRITISH AMBASSADOR WAKEFIELD AND I HAD LONG LUNCHEON  
CONVERSATION WITH DANY CHAMOUN AT YARZE, AUGUST 13. DANY'S  
REMARKS ON SOUTH LEBANON CAN BE SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS:

A. CHAMOUNISTS (PNL) AND KATAEB WILL TRY TO USE THEIR GOOD  
OFFICE WITH MILITIA IN SOUTH IF ARMY ALSO ENTERS BEIRUT. HE  
WOULD NOT GET PRECISE ABOUT NATURE OF ANY UNDERSTANDING THEY MAY  
HAVE WITH GOL ON SUBJECT, BUT INDICATED THAT THE ABOVE WAS PRO-  
POSITION THAT HAD BEEN PUT FORWARD. HE SAID THAT SYRIANS WANTED  
TO GET OUT OF BEIRUT AND THAT WAS WHY THEY WERE REDEPLOYING IN  
EASTERN SECTOR. WHEN I ASKED HIM WHAT MILITIAS WERE  
ASKING BEYOND PRESENT SYRIAN COMMITMENTS HE SAID SYRIANS  
HAD TO MOVE BACK FROM AIN AR-RUMMANEH AND LOOSEN GRIP ON

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HADETH.

B. HE SAID PNL AND KATAEB HAD SOME INFLUENCE WITH  
MILITIAS OF SOUTH, BUT BEHAVIOR OF LATTER WAS REALLY UP TO  
ISRAELIS AND WE SHOULD NOT TAKE SERIOUSLY LATTER'S DIS-  
CLAIMER OF CONTROL. IT WAS ISRAELIS WHO HAD EXCITED  
MILITIAS AGAINST ARMY BECAUSE THEY WERE AFRAID ARMY WOULD

TRY TO CLOSE GOOD FENCE. WHEN I ASKED HIM HOW HE KNEW THIS HE SAID HE HAD HEARD IT FROM ISRAELIS.

C. ASKED TO EXPLAIN ISRAELI INTEREST IN GOOD FENCE, HE SAID IT WAS LARGELY PSYCHOLOGICAL. ISRAELIS WANTED OPENING TO LEBANON AND FELT THEIR DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL IMAGES WERE STRENGTHENED BY THEIR BEING ABLE TO POSE AS PROTECTOR OF THE CHRISTIANS. FURTHERMORE, HE SAID, THEY WERE TAKING LEBANESE WATER INTO ISRAEL VIA A 6-INCH PIPE FROM QULAYA. THE WATER ULTIMATELY CAME FROM THE HASBANI NEAR IBL AS-SAQY. PIPE WENT THROUGH GOOD FENCE.

D. HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND NEED TO RUSH TROOPS TO SOUTH WHEN THEY WENT. ONLY JUSTIFICATION HE HAD HEARD WAS AMERICAN PRESSURE BECAUSE OF 425 RENEWAL ISSUE. HE DID NOT THINK THAT JUSTIFIED HASTY OPERATION WITH FORCE EQUIPPED AS BATTALION WAS. WHAT WERE THEY GOING TO DO WITH ARMORED CARS AND ARTILLERY? WHY DID THEY HAVE TO ASSIGN TURNCOAT LIKE SHAHINE AS DEPUTY COMMANDER?

2. I NOTED THAT GETTING SYRIANS OUT OF BEIRUT DEPENDED ON THEIR NOT BEING SNIPED AT. DANY REITERATED HIS CLAIM THAT ORIGINAL INCIDENT OF JULY 1 WAS SEIZED BY SYRIANS AS PRETEXT TO LAY DOWN PREVIOUSLY PLANNED AND ARRANGED BOMBARDMENT OF ASHRAFIYYAH AND AIN AR-RUMMANEH. SYRIAN MOTIVES WERE SUSPECT AND HE DID NOT BELIEVE THEIR JUSTIFICATIONS  
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FOR THEIR ACTIONS. NEVERTHELESS, HE AND AMINE GEMAYEL WERE WORKING TO EFFECT A DISENGAGEMENT. HIS PEOPLE WERE NOT FIRING, BUT BASHIR GEMAYEL, WHOSE STOCK HAD BEEN GIVEN GREAT BOOST BY SYRIAN TACTICS, WAS SOMETHING ELSE. HE NOTED THAT HE HAD SUGGESTED TO BASHIR LAST FEBRUARY, AT THE TIME OF FAYYIDIYAH, THAT THAAAT WAS THE TIME TO CLEAN UP ON THE SYRIANS, WHO WERE SCATTERED ALL OVER THE COUNTRY AND VERY EXPOSED. BASHIR HAD REFUSED.

3. DANY SAID BASHIR HAD RECEIVED A NUMBER OF MESSAGE FROM ISRAELIS TELLING HIM NOT TO PROVOKE TROUBLE AND THAT THEY WERE NOT COMING TO HIS RESCUE EXCEPT IN EXTREMIS. ISRAELIS HAD MADE IT CLEAR THEY DID NOT WISH TO GET INVOLVED BEYOND SUPPLY OF WEAPONS. BASHIR, HOWEVER, HAD BEEN TRYING TO PROVOKE SYRIAN RESPONSE SERIOUS ENOUGH TO BE CONSIDERED EXTREMIS. I ASKED WHAT ISRAELIS WOULD CONSIDER EXTREMIS. DANY SAID PERHAPS AN INFANTRY AND TANK ASSAULT IN AIN AR-RUMMANEH, TO WHICH ISRAELIS WOULD RESPOND WITH SOME SORT OF DIVERSIONARY ACTION.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
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EXDIS

4. WE DWELT AT SOME LENGTH ON DANGERS OF SITUATION, SYRIAN MOTIVES AND GOALS OF CHRISTIAN PARTIES. DANY MADE IT CLEAR THAT HIS FATHER, NOT HE, SPOKE FOR THE PARTY AND ATTEMPTS TO DEAL WITH HIM AND BYPASS HIS FATHER WOULD NOT WORK. HE SAID PNL WANTED GOL TO COME UP WITH RATIONAL PLAN FOR FUTURE OF LEBANON, A PLAN BASED ON SOME DECENTRALIZATION, WITH A NEW APPROACH TO GOVERNMENT, NOT BASED ON RULING FAMILIES. IF THERE WERE SUCH A PLAN, AND IT WAS REASONABLE, THEY WOULD SUPPORT IT. THEY HAD SUPPORTED CREATION OF A NEW ARMY; THE PNL HAD SENT 650 RECRUITS TO IT; THEY HAD SUPPORTED A MOVE TO THE SOUTH; THEY HAD MADE CLEAR TO THE SYRIANS THEIR DESIRE TO COOPERATE; BUT THEY WERE TIRED OF THE SYRIAN YOKE AND THE APATHY OF SARKIS. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, A WAR OF NATIONAL LIBERATION MIGHT BE FORCED UPON THEM.

5. WAKEFIELD POINTED OUT TO HIM THE DANGERS OF BECOMING OVERLY DEPENDENT ON THE ISRAELIS IN THEIR DESIRE TO GET AT THE  
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SYRIANS. DANY SAID HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE POLICIES OF THE WESTERN POWERS AND THE USG IN PARTICULAR. THE UNITED

STATES HAD APPROVED EVERY SHIPMENT OF ARMS THE ISRAELIS HAD MADE TO THE CHRISTIANS. IT WAS INCONCEIVABLE THAT THE ISRAELIS COULD HAVE DELIVERED THE QUANTITY OF M-16'S THEY GAVE THE KATAEB WITHOUT OUR APPROVAL AND HELP. HERE WAS OUR MAJOR ALLY IN THE MIDDLE EAST HELPING A BELEAGUED CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY--THE ONLY POWER WHICH HAD BEEN WILLING AND READY TO DO SO. WHY WERE WE SO HESITANT ABOUT IT? HE WAS NOT ASHAMED OF HIS CONTACTS WITH THE ISRAELIS. HE SAW THEM FREQUENTLY AND HAD TOLD ASSAD ALL ABOUT IT.

6. I NOTED THAT SUPPLY OF ARMS IN THE HOUR OF PERIL WAS ONE THING, AND A CONTINUING RELATIONSHIP WAS SOMETHING ELSE AS FAR AS CONSERVATIVE ARABS WERE CONCERNED. THE CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ISRAELIS WAS UNDERSTANDABLE. THE TWO COMMUNITIES HAD MUCH IN COMMON AND FACED SIMILAR RISKS. THEIR COOPERATION, HOWEVER, WAS UNFORTUNATELY BECOMING A MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUE AND AFFECTING ARAB ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE CHRISTIANS. UNLESS A WAY COULD BE FOUND TO QUIET ARAB APPREHENSIONS, THE LEBANESE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WOULD FIND ITSELF ISOLATED, WHICH IT HAD NOT BEEN BEFORE, AND THE FINAL OUTCOME WAS GOING TO BE PARTITION.

7. DANY SAID HE DID NOT SEE WHY HE SHOULD CARE ABOUT ARAB ATTITUDES; ALL THE PNL HAD EVER GOTTEN FROM THEM WAS \$400,000, FROM THE SAUDIS, WHO HAD GIVEN SAEB SALAAM \$30,000,000. HE THEN NOTED THAT EVEN HUSSEIN HAD TURNED AGAINST THE CHAMOUNS.

8. AT END OF CONVERSATION I TOLD DANY WE VERY MUCH WANTED TWO THINGS--A PERMANENT CEASE-FIRE IN BEIRUT AND MOVEMENT OF  
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LEBANESE TROOPS TO THE SOUTH. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE ISRAELIS HAD AGREED TO THE LATTER AND THAT THE WAY LAY OPEN. IF THE ISRAELIS WERE FOR IT, WE NEED NOT WORRY ABOUT THE CHRISTIANS IN THE SOUTH. THEY WOULD DO WHAT THEY WERE TOLD.

9. COMMENT. DANY WAS HIS USUAL MIXTURE OF CYNICISM AND NAIVETE. I FEAR WE DID NOT GET MUCH OF A COMMITMENT FROM HIM REGARDING THE SOUTH, AND WILL NOT UNLESS THERE IS FURTHER PROGRESS ON THE BEIRUT SECURITY SITUATION AND ON RELATIONS BETWEEN HIS FATHR AND SARKIS. AM NOT SURE HOW MUCH THE PNL CAN DO WITH THE MILITIAS IN THE SOUTH IN ANY EVENT. DANY'S SIMPLISTIC VIEW OF ISRAELI-MILITIA RELATIONS IS JUST LIKE THA OF EVERY OTHER LEBANESE. IT TYPIFIES THE THINKING WHICH SENT THE ARMY SOUTH WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT LAY AHEAD.  
PARKER

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## Message Attributes

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**Decaption Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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**Errors:** N/A  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014